

evidence-based best practices in public health with an emphasis on collaborative initiatives, and to update them on emerging public health issues, particularly those that are of greatest concern to their communities.

- (6) Conduct workforce preparedness assessments and follow-on training for the public health workforce in the pilot regions and to establish or supplement policy to facilitate effective responses to public health emergencies where appropriate.
- (7) Establish a formal, systematic review of the incubators to track and evaluate the efficacy of roles, organization, and programs, to identify best practices, and to develop recommendations for improvement based on these findings.

SECTION 10.32.(b) The Department of Health and Human Services shall report on the use of these funds and an evaluation of the incubator efforts to the Senate Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services, the House of Representatives Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, and the Fiscal Research Division. The Department shall submit the report not later than January 14, 2005.

FUNDS FOR SCHOOL NURSES

SECTION 10.33. Of the funds appropriated in this act to the Department of Health and Human Services, the sum of four million dollars (\$4,000,000) shall be used for a school nurse funding initiative. The Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health, in conjunction with the Department of Public Instruction, shall provide funds to communities to hire school nurses. The program will fund 80 permanent local nurses. The criteria shall include determining the areas in the greatest need for school nurses with the greatest inability to pay for these nurses. Other criteria to be considered shall include: (i) the current nurse-to-student ratio; (ii) the economic status of the community; and (iii) the health needs of area children.

There shall be no supplanting of local, State, or federal funds with these funds. Communities shall maintain their current level of effort and funding for school nurses. These funds shall not be used for funding nurses for State agencies. All funding shall be used for direct services.

The Department of Health and Human Services shall report on the use of funds allocated under this section by December 1, 2004, to the House of Representatives Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, the Senate Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services, and the Fiscal Research Division.

HOSPITAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT DATA REPORTING

SECTION 10.34.(a) Effective January 1, 2005, G.S. 130A-476(f) is repealed.

SECTION 10.34.(b) Effective January 1, 2005, Article 22 of Chapter 130A of the General Statutes is amended by adding the following new section to read:

"§ 130A-480. Emergency department data reporting.

(a) For the purpose of ensuring the protection of the public health, the State Health Director shall develop a syndromic surveillance program for hospital emergency departments in order to detect and investigate public health threats that may result from